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DEPARTMENT FOR S/USSES

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SUBJECT: SUDAN/DARFUR: JEM COMMITTED TO DOHA, CLAIMS TO  
GAIN STRENGTH AMONG DARFUR REBEL MOVEMENTS

Classified By: Political Counselor Richard Mills, reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) Summary. JEM will continue to engage with the Government of Sudan (GoS) and Bassole in Doha even though senior JEM leadership does not believe that the GoS negotiates in good faith, Gibril Ibrahim and Ahmed Adam said on April 25. At upcoming negotiations, JEM will push for the resumption of the activities of the 13 expelled NGOs in Darfur, while at the same time insisting that both sides continue the prisoner exchange agreed to at Doha in March. The military arm of the movement has succeeded in attracting numerous Darfuri rebels, they claimed, including a large proportion of fighters from SLA/Unity. JEM leadership sees the Chadian opposition as more divided than was previously thought, and Chadian President Idriss Deby as very strong, a balance which has led to a very tense situation in the border areas of Chad and Sudan. End summary.

JEM "Committed" to Doha  
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12. (C) Fresh from discussions in Doha with Qatari Foreign Minister Ali Mahmoud on April 20-22, Gibril Ibrahim, London-based chairman of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and Ahmed Adam, JEM spokesman, told Embassies London and Khartoum poloffs on April 24 that they remain committed to negotiations in Doha despite their previous public pronouncements expressing disdain for the process and their agreement signed with the GoS in March. "The Sudanese government is not a good-faith negotiator," Ibrahim said, but cautioned that despite this, JEM sees the Doha process as legitimate and will continue to participate. "Now they think they are strong, but they will offer no meaningful concessions." Adam said that JEM is giving the talks "credibility" as the movement is reaching out to other movements and civil society actors to bring them on board in Doha under the JEM umbrella.

13. (C) Setting the stage for further negotiations with the GoS in May, Ibrahim and Adam pressed the Qataris this week to insist on the return of the 13 expelled international NGOs, and JEM will continue to advise the international community not to accept the GoS plan for the "Sudanization" of the humanitarian effort in Darfur. Additionally, JEM views the resumption of the prisoner exchange as a make-or-break issue essential to the success of the upcoming talks. Estimating that the GoS currently holds approximately 300 JEM prisoners of war in addition to the 71 prisoners sentenced to death following the May 10, 2008 JEM attack on Khartoum, Adam was uncertain of the number of GoS prisoners of war currently held in the field by JEM. He said that JEM military leaders remain committed to releasing the GoS prisoners if the GoS takes the first step and releases the JEM prisoners.

14. (C) In contrast to other lead rebel actors in Darfur, JEM's confidence in the Doha talks extends to trust in the work of the UN/AU Joint Chief Mediator Gibril Bassole.

Expressing admiration for his "low-profile" style, Ibrahim believes Bassole to be a good listener and a competent mediator, but sees him as weakened by his staff and the African Union's wholehearted support for the Sudanese regime.

Ibrahim criticized the U.S. for using "soft language" towards the National Congress Party (NCP) following recent visits by the Special Envoy and Senator John Kerry, but acknowledged that JEM has benefited from the talks, and looks forward to the U.S. and the international community playing a stronger role in Doha. "We are not shopping for venues," Ibrahim pledged. "Let's concentrate on the issues."

#### JEM Grows As Chadian Rebels Weaken

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15. (C) Confirming rumors from the field and unsourced web postings, Ibrahim and Adam boasted that the military leadership of JEM has made significant inroads among weakened rebel movements, expanding beyond the Zaghawa sub-tribe of the Kobe to bring Fur, Masalit, non-Kobe Zaghawa and even Arab commanders to JEM. "We now have 99 percent of SLA/Unity with JEM," Adam said, citing the recent acquisition of rebel leader Suleiman Jamous and 27 commanders, and minor rebel commanders including Abdalla Yahia, Adam Ali Shogar, and Tafada Al-Merrih. Additionally, JEM has managed to pull in Masalit commanders in West Darfur previously grouped under the SLA/Main Line; SLA/Abdul Wahid commanders in areas near Jebel Moon; and Rizeigat and Benihalba Arab militia in South Darfur. Explaining that the December 2008 fighting that resulted in the deaths of over one hundred Meidob in Eastern Chad was a "mutiny," Ibrahim insisted that the event has had no adverse effects on JEM's ability to develop tribal

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alliances in Darfur or Eastern Chad.

16. (C) Asked about JEM's position vis-a-vis Chadian rebels, Ibrahim said that the situation in the field in Eastern Chad and Darfur has remained calm because neither Chadian President Idriss Deby nor the Chadian rebels supported by Khartoum want to engage in small skirmishes prior to an assault on N'Djamena. Agreeing with international experts, Ibrahim was also surprised that the Chadian rebels did not assault Deby's capital in March of this year, but believes that this reflects division in the ranks of the rebels in the field. "Erdimi fooled everyone into thinking that he could overthrow Deby with a phone call, but Deby is very confident and stronger every day," Ibrahim said, adding that numerous Chadian opposition leaders displeased with the NCP-appointed leadership have crossed over to the ranks of the Chadian government. Still, calling the situation there the "calm before the storm," Adam said that JEM commanders believe the rebels will attack eventually, perhaps after the rainy season.

Comment

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17. (C) A smooth talker who has done wonders for a Darfuri rebel movement once considered to be among the weakest in the field, Ibrahim knows that JEM's prestige has increased since entering into formal talks with the GoS at Doha, and his confidence in the peace process stems from that. It remains ironic that even as JEM commits to the talks, it also is simultaneously acquiring free agents to strengthen its military presence in the field.

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